



TCEQ REGULATORY GUIDANCE

Small Business and Environmental Assistance

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Waste from Grease Traps, Grit Traps, and Septic Tanks: Questions and Answers

This publication is for those who generate waste from grease traps, grit traps, and septic tanks, including homeowners with septic tanks. If you generate any of these types of waste, it is important for you to know and comply with regulations because you are responsible for managing the waste—from the time it is generated, transported, and processed to the time of final disposal.

This guide answers many questions the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality receives about its waste regulations. This publication is for general guidance only. It does not take the place of any state or local regulations. “I” refers to a business, individual, or other generator of waste.

Grease-Trap Waste

Am I required to have a grease trap?

A grease trap is required for any facility (including municipal, state, or federal) whose business activity is the source of cooking grease or oil in sewage—such as restaurants, cafeterias, and food-processing plants—and is located in an area that has adopted a plumbing code. Plumbing codes do not allow discharges of grease into the sewers because discharges block the lines.

Who regulates my grease trap?

Grease traps are regulated by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), your local wastewater utility, or both. The TCEQ regulates the pumping (evacuation), transportation, and disposal of all grease-trap waste. The TCEQ may regulate the design, size, and installation of grease traps and interceptors during the permitting of a septic system.

Do I have to register my grease trap?

Grease traps do not need to be registered with the TCEQ; however, local authorities may require registration.

May I dispose of my own grit-trap wastes?

All grit-trap wastes—wet or dry—must be disposed of at an authorized facility. Because grit-trap wastes may be contaminated with benzene, lead, oils, and other automotive fluids, landfills usually require tests before accepting these wastes. Not all landfills can accept grit-trap waste, so please call the landfill before transporting.

Septic-Tank Waste

Who regulates my septic tank?

Septic tanks are regulated by the TCEQ directly or by a TCEQ-authorized agent from local government. The TCEQ regulates the installation of septic tanks, as well as the pumping (evacuation), transportation, processing, and disposal of septic-tank waste.

Do I have to register my septic tank?

The TCEQ or TCEQ-authorized agent must authorize construction of your septic system before its installation, and then inspect the system when installation is complete to formally permit the system and authorize operation. Permits are also required for existing systems that are upgraded or repaired. (See the last page of this publication for contact information about septic tanks, also known as on-site wastewater or sewage facilities or OSSFs.)

Who can pump my septic tank?

Only transporters registered with the TCEQ can legally pump and transport septic-tank waste. You may call your local TCEQ regional office for the list of registered transporters in your area.

Transporting Waste

What information is required on a registered transporter's trip ticket?

The TCEQ requires the following information to be on a transporter's multi-part trip ticket. This paper trail tracking the waste is also called a *manifest*. All transporters must meet the requirements in 30 TAC 312 and provide a completed manifest to their customers. A sample manifest appears in *Transporting Sludge Wastes in Texas* (TCEQ publication RG-309).

Generator

The generator of the waste should check the following to make certain that the information is complete and correct:

- your name, address, and phone number

a list of transporters authorized to use its site. In order to verify your transporter's TCEQ registration, ask to see a copy and check for a dated sticker on the truck's door. Each vehicle registered with the TCEQ is required to have both.

Can a transporter pump both my septic tank and my grease trap in the same load?

Transporters cannot mix wastes with different characteristics, except in very rare cases. Most facilities are not authorized to store, process, or dispose of these mixed wastes. If you plan to recycle grease-trap waste, it certainly cannot be mixed with other wastes. Grease-trap waste that is designated for recycling is called brown grease. Transporters of brown grease must be registered under 30 TAC 312.

Please note that TCEQ transportation regulations do not apply to used cooking oil from fryers and similar sources that do not come from or pass through grease traps. This is called yellow grease, and it is rendered and recycled. Transporting this grease is regulated under DSHS rules. Yellow grease must be stored in a special container for pickup by the recycler.

A recycler of yellow grease does not need to be registered under 30 TAC 312; however, the DSHS regulations found in 25 TAC 221, Subchapter A, must be followed. Transporters and recyclers of yellow grease are required to apply for a rendering license from the DSHS. You may call the DSHS Meat Safety Assurance Unit at 512-834-6760 or visit their Web page at www.dshs.state.tx.us/msa/render.shtm#license.

If a registered transporter hauls my waste, am I still responsible for its proper disposal?

Yes. If your waste is illegally dumped, you are considered to be at fault and you could face enforcement proceedings. Remember, as the generator of any waste, you must ensure that your waste is disposed of at a registered receiving facility. The generator could be held liable for any cleanup costs linked to an improper receiving facility. In addition, an early cleanup will limit the spread of contamination and decrease the costs for remediation.

Tips for Increased Compliance

- Carefully select a registered transporter.
- Verify the information on the manifest: receipt of proper amount, disposal at correct facility, signature of receiving facility employee.
- Promptly clean up any spilled waste.
- Report any problems to the TCEQ regional office as soon as possible.

What does it cost to have my trap or tank pumped?

Costs vary depending on such factors as choice of transporter, distance to receiving facility, frequency of pumping, volume pumped, receiving facility

Environmental-complaint hotline	888-777-3186
On-site sewage facilities	512-239-0914
Website	< www.tceq.texas.gov/licensing/ossf >
Online information about rules	< www.tceq.texas.gov/rules/current.html >
Texas State Department of Health Services Meat Safety Assurance Unit	512-834-6760
Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners Uniform Plumbing Code	800-854-2766

For More Information

For assistance with environmental compliance for small businesses and local governments call the Small Business and Local Government Hotline, 800-447-2827, or visit <www.TexasEnviroHelp.org>.